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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Somalia - TFG Parliament Adds Seats for ARS

REF: a) DJIBOUTI 50

CLASSIFIED BY: Bob Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: The Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) on January 26 overwhelmingly agreed to double the number of seats for parliamentarians, in order to allow Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) MPs to formally complete the next step in forming a unity government. The TFP is scheduled later on January 26 to extend the transitional government's mandate for two years. Somalia Unit and other members of the international community continued to pressure the acting President, Prime Minister, and MPs to elect a new president by January 28. Meanwhile, the ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif told us January 26 that the ARS list of 200 MP-nominees was ready for release, and would be passed soon to the acting President. The ARS Central Committee on January 25 nominated Sharif as its candidate for president. End summary.

The Vote

12. (C) On January 26, the Transitional Federal Parliament voted 211 - 6, with 3 abstentions to increase its size by 275 seats as the next step in creating a TFG - ARS unity government. (Note: The ARS will be able to use 200 seats for members of its Central Committee and its supporters. The remaining 75 seats will be held for representatives of civil society, the business community, and to bring in those who have been outside the Djibouti process.) The vote paves the way for ARS deputies to be sworn in, possibly as early as January 27. Their entry into Parliament should set the stage for the election of a unity government president, perhaps by January 28.

13. (C) The overwhelming vote to include the ARS was preceded by much agonizing on the part of some transitional parliamentarians and active efforts by others to convince their fellow parliamentarians and members of the international community that including the ARS would allow "Islamists" to take control of the government. They also accused the ARS of not adhering to the 4.5 formula for clan representation.

14. (C) Members of the Somalia Unit, others in the international community, and the UN's Special Representative lobbied hard, in the days preceding the vote, to counter efforts by the TFG leadership and many MPs to extend the deadline, established by the Transitional Federal Charter, for electing a new president in the event of resignation. (Note: The Charter allots the Parliament thirty days to elect a new president. Former President Yusuf resigned on December 29.) In difficult last-minute conversations the morning of January 26, Parliament Speaker Sheikh Aden "Madobe" was persuaded to make every effort to ensure that the Parliament did not extend the deadline.

ARS Preparations

15. (C) In a long meeting on January 26, ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif and Executive Committee Head Sharif Hassan assured Somalia Unit that the ARS list of 200 MP-nominees was ready, had been vetted by all of the respective clans, and conformed with the 4.5 formula. One hundred of the two hundred prospective deputies were already in Djibouti, they said and, with UNPOS help, they expected the remaining nominees to arrive in Djibouti no later than January 28. The ARS leaders also told us that the ARS Central Committee had January 25 nominated Sheikh Sharif as their candidate for president. The ARS leadership agreed after an extended negotiation with Somalia Unit and the UK Somalia Watcher, that they would not push for the election of a new Speaker. (Note: SRSG Ould-Abdallah had guaranteed the current Speaker, "Madobe," that he would do all possible to protect his position in order to ensure that the Speaker was not worried about his own immediate future as he presided over the smooth election of a new president.)

16. (C) Although the Parliament on January 26 did not amend the Charter to allow additional time for the election of a president, the ARS continued to insist to us that the elections would lack legitimacy if they were held just one day after their MPs were to take the oath of office. They urged that the Djibouti parliamentary session be extended by several more days, and blamed the lack of progress in forming a unity government and electing a successor to President Yusuf on the TFG's failure to convene Parliament until January 25.

17. (C) Although the international community, led by SRSG Ould-Abdallah, has continues to insist that presidential elections occur not later than January 28, resistance among MPs and the TFG leadership remains strong. They note that only two days remain to transport ARS MP-nominees to Djibouti, swear them in, preview a large number of presidential candidates, and conduct the

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three-round vote. Some deputies seem interested in staying longer in order to maximize the UN per diem they are collecting while in Djibouti. Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein "Nur Adde" told us January 26 that the short deadline was causing him to re-consider his candidacy but appears to have been talked out of his pre-election jitters.

Comment

18. (C) The progress made in today's session was notable, paving the way for the ARS to take an active role in the election of a new

president. We will continue to pressure transitional federal institution members to hold this election by the 30-day, January 28 deadline established by the Charter, but it appears possible, at this juncture, that the deadline will not be met. A press release issued by UNPOS following the Parliament's vote, appears to be preparing the way for that eventuality. It notes that the President will be sworn in on January 31.
SWAN

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:ab7edb7a-33cc-4108-81